

time, critical functions are contracted out to the private sector without adequate oversight. Then the administration turns around and says, see, government doesn't work.

Madam Speaker, it's time we reversed course and put adequate resources, attention, and accountability towards the needs of all our citizens but most especially our veterans.

#### PENTAGON SHOULD HAVE TAKEN ACTION EARLIER THAN THE RELEASE OF THE POST INVESTIGATION

(Mr. SPACE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker, both high-ranking Pentagon officials and the White House have said that they were shocked to learn of the shoddy treatment wounded soldiers were receiving at Walter Reed. They say the first time they heard about this treatment was from The Washington Post investigation last month.

Madam Speaker, there is simply no way that the Bush administration did not know that this was a problem before the Post report. Several GAO reports have been conducted at the urging of Congress, and the findings of those reports back up exactly what we are now seeing at Walter Reed.

The Washington Post was also not the first media outlet to highlight this problem. Salon magazine reported on the mistreatment of soldiers at Walter Reed 2 years ago.

And yet the Bush administration continues to claim that it knew nothing about this until the Washington Post investigation last month. The administration is either completely out of touch or it simply does not believe taking care of our wounded military personnel is a top priority. Either way, it should be a top concern for this Congress and the American people.

#### BUSH ADMINISTRATION SHOULD NOT BE NICKEL-AND-DIMING AMERICA'S INJURED SOLDIERS

(Mr. SIREs asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, The Washington Post headlines said it best: "Rotten Homecoming—This is no way to treat a veteran."

A 4-month Washington Post investigation found frustrating delays some of our returning soldiers are facing in receiving the compensation they are owed for the service to this Nation. One soldier was sent to Walter Reed after being smashed in the head by a steel cargo door of an 18-wheeler near the Iraqi border. Now the Pentagon is saying that the soldier's mental impairment comes from his being slow in high school, not from the dramatic head injury he suffered in combat.

Madam Speaker, this Congress has already begun investigating the out-

rageous problems our soldiers are facing at Walter Reed. President Bush cannot send them off to battle without properly caring for them when they return home.

#### CONGRESS MUST STOP FUNDING THE WAR

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, it appears that Congress, in the name of supporting the troops, will soon give President Bush the money he needs to continue the war in Iraq even though we don't take care of the troops when they come home.

If Congress funds the war, what will happen next? More troop casualties; more innocent civilians die; more destruction to Iraq; more destruction to our budget here at home; cuts in health care and education and job creation and housing and, yes, in veterans care.

Unless Congress cuts off funds and brings our troops home, we will be in Iraq for years to come. And for what?

I have introduced H.R. 1234, a bill to bring our troops home and stabilize Iraq.

Congress must take the first step and stop funding the war. Support the troops. Bring them home. Support H.R. 1234.

#### BUSH ADMINISTRATION NOT PROPERLY PLANNING TO CARE FOR WOUNDED MILITARY PERSONNEL

(Mr. ARCURI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ARCURI. Madam Speaker, the treatment some of our wounded military personnel are receiving at Walter Reed Army Hospital and other facilities around the Nation is outrageous and should be fixed immediately.

The conditions and the neglect that many of these wounded soldiers are facing is just another example of this administration's failure to plan for the war in Iraq. It was bad enough that the administration went into this war without properly planning for the aftermath of the fall of Baghdad. It is inexcusable that the same administration does not have an acceptable plan to care for wounded soldiers who return from combat in Iraq.

We have all heard the stories about soldiers being moved into Building 18 with mold, mice, and cockroaches because Walter Reed had simply run out of space.

Time after time this administration has cut the Veterans Administration budget during a time of war. And now the President wants to send an additional 21,000 troops into Iraq. How can we think of sending more troops into Iraq when we don't have enough space here in our military hospitals to provide the wounded with the care they rightfully deserve?

We promise our veterans the quality care they need and deserve when they sign up to serve our country. It is time we make good on that promise.

#### WALTER REED HOSPITAL

(Ms. NORTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, at yesterday's hearing on Walter Reed, I asked the brass whether putting Walter Reed on the BRAC closure list had affected the hospital's staffing and stability. All responded that it had. Army Vice Chief of Staff Cody said, "We're trying to get the best people. Who would want to sign up to work at a hospital that might be closing?"

You don't close your premium military hospital in the middle of a shooting war and the war on terrorism. I can't imagine that Congress would spend \$3 billion on bricks and mortar that could go to wounded soldiers and to veterans. Yet as long as BRAC mandates closure, vital staff who value their careers get the closure signal.

This week I intend to file a bill to keep Walter Reed open. Too much harm has been done already. Let's not compound Walter Reed's problems by keeping a costly closure threat on the books.

#### SCHIP

(Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about the immediate crisis in Georgia's PeachCare program.

Georgia's SCHIP program is expected to have \$131 million in shortfall this fiscal year. This shortfall has forced the Georgia Department of Community Health to announce that by March 11, in only 5 days, it will no longer accept new enrollees. This means that by next week nearly 300,000 children in Georgia will remain uninsured and unable to participate in this hugely successful program.

The leadership in the Georgia General Assembly seems to think that eliminating some children from the program will help resolve the PeachCare crisis. The Governor has so far not stated publicly that he will use available State money to sustain PeachCare during this shortfall crisis. And Congress, for its part, has been unable to act quickly enough to appropriate the funds that Georgia and the other 13 shortfall States need.

The Georgia General Assembly, the Governor, and the Congress must act immediately to save the PeachCare program. Georgia must continue to provide health care to children who are currently enrolled in the PeachCare program and to all of those children who are eligible for the program.

Long live the Dixie Chicks.